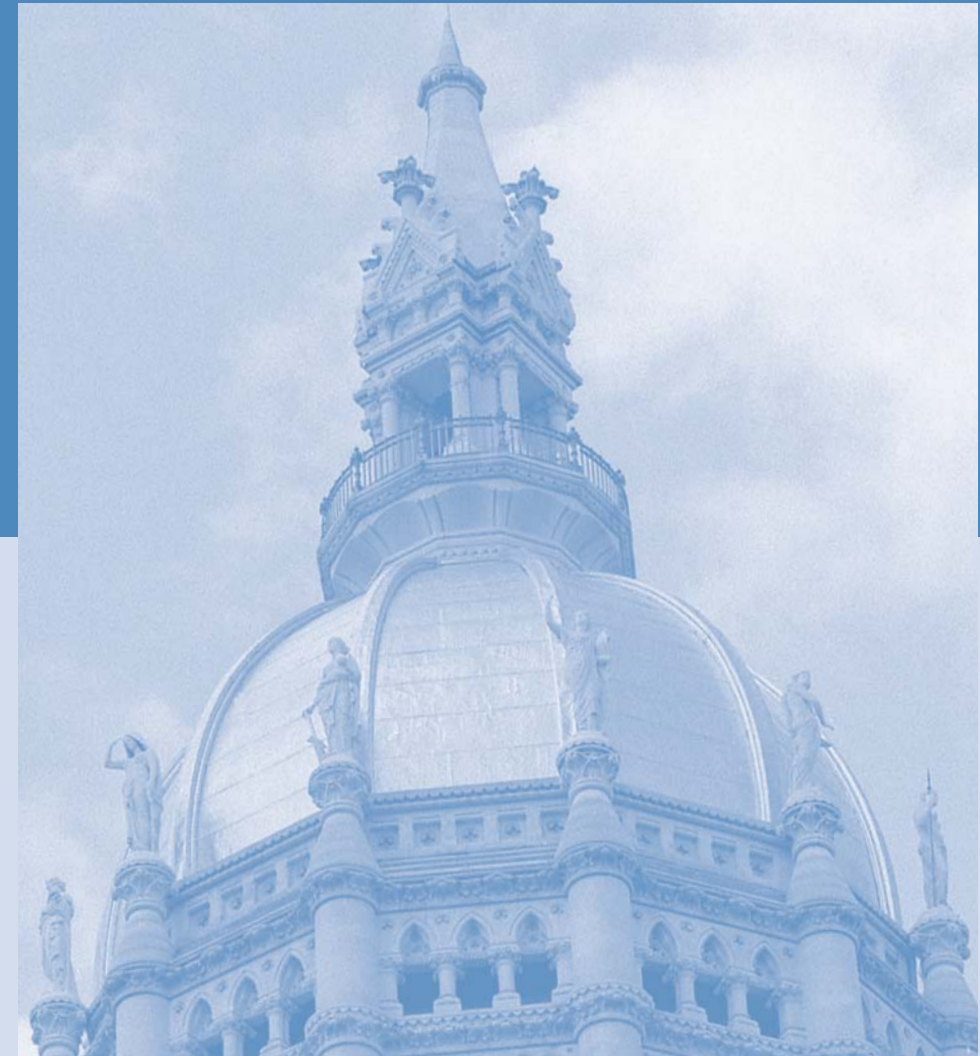


2006 Legislative Report to the 34th District

State Senator Len Fasano



Serving the people of:

East Haven

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How to Reach Me:

State Senator
Len Fasano

MAIL

Senator Len Fasano
Legislative Office Building, Room 3400
Hartford, CT 06106 - 1591

TELEPHONE

1-800-842-1421

TTY 860-240-0163
(text telephone for the hearing impaired)

E-MAIL

Len.Fasano@cga.ct.gov

SENATE REPUBLICAN WEBSITE

www.senaterepublicans.ct.gov

Helping and Honoring Our State's Veterans

I have long been an ardent supporter of veterans, since it is due to their honorable service that we enjoy the many freedoms this country has to offer. That's why I am especially thrilled to serve as Ranking Senator on the Select Committee on Veterans Affairs, where I can help pass legislation that provides benefits and properly honors our state's former servicemen and women.



This year we passed a law that requires the Governor of the State of Connecticut to order both the American flag and Connecticut state flag flown at half-staff following the death of a member of the armed forces in the line of duty. The American flag is an important symbol for all Americans, especially those who bravely served our country.

We also passed legislation that excludes veterans' disability payments when determining property tax exemptions. In addition, we expanded the number of veterans eligible to access certain state and municipal programs. Those National Guard members whom the Governor orders into state active service will now have the same protection two federal laws give to federal active service members.

Further, as you may have heard, personal information on thousands of U.S. Veterans was stolen from the Maryland home of an employee with the Federal Department of Veterans Affairs. In response, I recently co-hosted a forum with the Connecticut Department of Veterans' Affairs Commissioner Linda Schwartz in order to share with veterans ways they can properly protect their financial and credit information. For additional information on this topic, please visit my website at www.senaterepublicans.ct.gov.

Your Cell Phone Records Protected

It came to my attention this session that a variety of web-based businesses were illegally selling personal cell phone records of Connecticut citizens. People's cell phone records are as private as their financial and medical records and most certainly should not be for sale. With the help of several of my Senate Republican colleagues and the Attorney General, we alerted citizens of this illegal practice and drafted legislation that prohibits the sale or solicitation of individual's cell phone records.

Soon after we publicized this matter, several of the websites that had been selling the cell phone records ceased operations. Plus, our legislation received unanimous support in both the state Senate and state House of Representatives and was signed into law by Governor Rell.

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State Senator *Len Fasano*

Dear Constituent,

The 2006 legislative session saw a variety of important legislation passed. I continued to advocate on behalf of controlled state spending in order to keep your taxes at reasonable rates and keep funding available for local municipalities.

This year, my colleagues and I helped pass a much more fiscally responsible budget bill than in years past. Thanks to my and other legislators’ advocacy, we were able to help stop excessive spending proposals – thereby freeing up millions of dollars to pay for improvements to local education, an increase in the local property tax credit, and a variety of business tax credits that will help add new jobs to our state’s economy.

Please take a moment to read in more detail some of the other things we were able to accomplish this session.

If you have any questions on these or any other state issues, please feel free to contact me. I value your input and take every comment and suggestion I receive into consideration when making decisions at the Capitol.

Sincerely,



Len Fasano



The State Budget – A Fine Compromise

This session we approved revisions to the 2006-07 biennial state budget that we passed last year. The final product was one of the more responsible budget bills I have seen as state senator and thus received my support. However, it took some significant effort on my part, as well as several of my Republican colleagues, to reach this compromise.

The budget plan initially proposed in the Appropriations Committee was fiscally irresponsible as it took the \$600 million surplus we had this year and, through increased spending, turned it into a \$1.3 billion deficit by 2008. Plus, that proposal failed to stay under the state’s Constitutionally mandated spending cap. Needless to say, I joined several of my colleagues in coming out very hard against that proposal and voting against this bill.

Fortunately, our hard fight paid off as most of the changes we advocated for were included in the revised legislation that ultimately passed both chambers and was signed into law by the Governor.

The one year compromise agreement remains under the spending cap in Fiscal Year 2007, increases the property tax credit from \$350 to \$500, and eliminates a 15% corporate tax surcharge for the 2007 income year. The bill also includes several pro-business incentives that will help to expand jobs in Connecticut and keep businesses in the state.

Teachers’ Retirement

The funding of Connecticut public school teachers’ pensions received a great deal of attention this legislative session, and rightfully so. Since our state’s teachers do not participate in the federal government’s Social Security program, they rely on the state Teachers’ Retirement Fund (TRF) for their pensions. Unfortunately, in the 30 year history of the TRF, it has only been funded at 100% by the legislature once, and now it faces an estimated \$5.3 billion shortfall.

That’s why I have continued to advocate on behalf of legislation that would amend the Connecticut State Constitution to require the state to fully fund the TRF each and every year. Teachers are one of Connecticut’s most valuable resources as they help groom our state’s future leaders. They deserve to know that their pensions will be there for them when they retire.

Although we were not able to pass the new Constitutional Amendment, we were able to fully fund the Teachers’ Retirement Fund in both Fiscal Year 2006 and Fiscal Year 2007 by depositing \$246 million of the budget surplus into the Fund. I promise to continue to advocate on behalf of teachers in order to ensure that they receive their full, promised benefits when they retire.

Driver Safety – No More Fake Air Bags

I was informed that some Connecticut auto repair shops had been solicited by companies selling “fake air bag covers.” These covers look identical to the authentic ones found on your automobile’s steering wheel, with one distinct difference – there is no air bag underneath. Such devices may be attractive for potential buyers since they are less expensive than working air bag covers.

Yet these imposter covers, quite obviously, are extremely dangerous to Connecticut motorists, especially considering drivers may not even know that they are putting themselves and their passengers at risk. That’s why I helped craft legislation that prohibits anyone in Connecticut from selling or even offering to sell any device intended to replace an air bag if the seller knows that it does not meet federal safety standards.

Driver safety is extremely important to me and I do not want anyone, or anything, compromising the well-being of drivers in this district or anywhere in Connecticut.

Stiffer Penalties For Those Who Assault Children

One of our primary Senate Republican caucus agendas this session was to advocate on behalf of increasing penalties in Connecticut for those convicted of sexual assault of a child. Proposals to increase penalties, more specifically 25 year mandatory minimums for those convicted of these heinous crimes, have become known nationwide as “Jessica’s Law.” “Jessica’s Law” was originally passed in Florida in response to the kidnapping and killing of 9 year old Jessica Lunsford by a released criminal who was wanted for probation violations.

We had to negotiate with the Majority Party on the parameters of the final legislation that ultimately passed the state Senate. The compromise mandated a 25-year prison term for a first offense and life imprisonment for a second offense for individuals convicted of first degree, second degree or aggravated sexual assault of a child under the age of 13, as well as for promoting prostitution of a minor.

As a father of three children, I wanted to include additional language that would have increased penalties for those convicted of soliciting children online. Although the bill did not become law this year, I will continue to strongly advocate for tougher laws for those who prey on children. Twenty-five years is the absolute minimum an individual who commits these unspeakable crimes should spend behind bars.

